

## [Pioneer Reminiscences]

W1226

Beliefs & [Customs?]-[Folkstuff?]

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WPA L. C. PROJECT [ Writers'?] UNIT

Form[md]3 Folklore Collection (or Type)

Title Pioneer reminiscences

Place of origin Portland, Ore. Date 1/13/39

Project worker Sara [B.?] Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks L

Form A

## Library of Congress

Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date January 13, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Pioneer reminiscences.

Name and address of informant Mrs. Laura Minto Irwin Multnomah Hotel, Portland, Oregon.

Date and time of interview January 8, 1939.

Place of interview Home of interviewer, Upper Drive, Lake Grove, Oswego, [Ore.?)

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant [md]

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

The informant was a guest of the interviewer on this date.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

## Library of Congress

Works Progress Administration

### OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date January 13, 1939.

Address Project office, 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon.

Subject Pioneer reminiscences.

Name and address of informant Mrs. Laura Minto Irwin Multnomah Hotel, Portland, Oregon.

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry
2. Place and date of birth
3. Family
4. Places lived in, with dates
5. Education, with dates
6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities
9. Description of informant
10. Other points gained in interview

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1. English and Scotch.
2. Salem, Oregon. 1872.
3. Father, John W. Minto.[md] Once Portland postmaster; in the early 1900's warden of State Penitentiary, Salem, and various other public offices. Mother, Rebecca Yocum Minto.
4. Salem 1872-1891. Portland, 1891 till present time.
5. Public schools, Mills College, 1890.
6. Accountant and office manager. More than 30 years at Bushong Co., Portland.
7. "No time for anything but the above."
8. Some social activities. No religious affiliations.
9. Petite, dark-eyed and white-haired. Well-groomed and modish dresser. Clever, but not what one would call intellectual. Too busy socially and with business affairs, for books.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date December 13, 1939.

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Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon.

Subject Pioneer reminiscences.

Name and address of informant Mrs. Laura Minto Irwin Multnomah Hotel, Portland, Oregon.

Text:

My recollection and knowledge of grandfather are more limited than they should be, and that is all the connection I have with Oregon folklore. Grandfather was a visionary and romantic sort of person for his time. He dearly loved the solitudes and would yield to any sudden impulse in seeking them. He might be plowing out in the field, when he would suddenly put his team up, as they called it, get his coffee pot and frying pan, and with a saddlebag of flour, bacon and coffee, his gun, and anything in the way of fishing tackle then available, go off to the mountains. He might stay a few days and he might stay for weeks. Grandmother never knew until he reappeared. He was much given to writing, putting down on paper not only his thoughts and ideas, but writing detailed reports on Oregon conditions, needs and agricultural possibilities, which he sent to Washington. Sometimes he wrote poetry. He was a friend of Robert Louis Stevenson. Among his manuscripts there must be a lot of imaginative writing.

Grandfather, on his pony, White Prince, blazed the Minto Trail, across the Cascades, clear through to Prineville. I'm not sure but I think the Minto Trail was the forerunner of the [Santism?] route across the mountains, into Eastern Oregon. Grandmother, under such conditions, was naturally alone a great deal, except for 2 her children, who at that time were young. That she should have been frightened by the Indians once in a while was inevitable. There was a tree [md]I suppose it has long since disappeared[md] on the old donation land claim, that she used to point to, saying she had once shot and killed an Indian there. Another time, when she and her children were alone, four Indians

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come, acting in a very ugly and threatening manner, and just then an old man appeared, apparently from out the blue. His presence lent her courage to defy the Indians, and he, a white man, helped in driving them away. There were no roads, only trails, in those days, and where the old man come from or where he went to [md] so sudden was his appearance and disappearance [md] she never knew.

Grandfather, with the mood of inspiration on him, would often got up in the night and write for hours at a time, going out to the kitchen maybe, to brew himself a pot of coffee, two or three times before morning. Perhaps he wrote then so as not to be interrupted, for when grandmother came sweeping with her broom about him, he would stand it just so long, and then get up in a temper, exclaiming in a rising crescendo, "Now then! Now then! Now then!" I can hear him now.

But grandfather never grew too old for the charm of a pretty woman. I don't mean by that, however, that he was in any sense a philanderer. He simply admired beauty.

The Yocum family, near Sheridan, my mother's people, had more money and consequently more luxurious living than the Mintos, but my memories there are vague. They had a comfortable big square house of the period, out in front of which was the mounting block. A mounting block was a section of a tree, two or three feet in diameter, with carved steps in its side, for the convenience of women in mounting a horse. No country home was without one, any more than the old time scraper for muddy feet at front and rear doors. My aunts of the Yocum family were all great horsewomen. I can remember the stunning picture Aunt Rita made in her long black velvet riding habit, and her hat with the long blue plume. She used to ride at the State Fair, I believe, along with the other, of what I suppose were the society girls of the country round about. They always got new clothes for the State Fair [md] the great event of the year. Aunt Eva comes to memory in a brocaded, wine-colored velvet, in which she out a very dashing figure. Out at their big farm there was a huge watering trough, where all the stock came to drink, that created quite an impression on me, as I always lived in town. The Yocum men all liked to

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hunt, and there was always a big pack of long-eared "hound dogs" about. The State Fair, as I said, was the big event of the year. Everybody who was anybody as well as those who were not would come from all the country round about, within a radius of a hundred miles or more, depending on what and how much they had to exhibit in stock and products. They would come, whole families and clans, with their camping paraphernalia [md] several tents for the family and such servants as there might be [md] hired men and girls, I should say. That included tents for all purposes, living room, kitchen and sleeping tents, with old carpets laid on the ground, and stoves, both heating and cooking. The camp ground was in a grove of scrub oaks, and much of the firewood was oak [md] it must have been: for the smoke from the fires those early autumn days was so blue and odorous [md] like no other blue or smell of my recollection. There would be lanes, with pens for the prize sheep, and other lanes or alleys with pens for the prize goats [md] that's inhere my mother's people, the [Yocums?], held forth; and still other lanes for the prize cattle. The big clan of Looneys always had prize cattle. There were rows and rows of these lanes; with their tents and prize stock pens not too close, of course.

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Form D

Extra Comment

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date January 13, 1939.

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon.

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Subject Pioneer reminiscences

Name and address of informant Mrs. Laura Minto Irwin Multnomah Hotel, Portland, Oregon.

Comment:

Mrs. Irwin in her interview, gave the information that an old fashioned valise, packed tightly with old letters and manuscripts of her grandfather Minto, is in the possession of her son, Clifton Irwin, at Salem. She is under the impression that somewhere, possibly not in this collection, there is an autobiography written and prepared for publication by John Minto, just prior to his death.

Since Mr. Minto was a writer and a close observer. His papers should be of considerable historic and folklore value, and the interviewer is intent on following the clue to these papers.